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UNCLAS HANOI 001094

SIPDIS

SENSITIVE

STATE FOR EAP/BCLTV AND DRL

E.O. 12958: N/A

TAGS: [PHUM](#) [KIRF](#) [PREL](#) [VM](#) [RELFREE](#) [HUMANR](#) [ETMIN](#)

SUBJECT: Ha Giang remains sore spot for Protestants

REF: Hanoi 383

1. (U) A leader of the Evangelical Church of Vietnam-North has provided additional details about three Protestant figures in Ha Giang province in the Northwest Highlands who had been arrested (reftel) as well as information about an additional arrest, as follow:

-- Ly Sin Quang, 28 years old, from Giap Trung village, Thang Tin Commune, Hoang Su Phi District, was arrested December 6, 2003. He was sentenced to 26 months in prison. He became a Protestant in 1991. His wife and four children are reportedly facing economic hardship now;  
-- Vang Chin Sang, 56 years old, also from Giap Trung village, Thang Tin Commune, Hoang Su Phi District, was arrested November 26, 2003. He was sentenced to 36 months imprisonment. He became a Christian in 1999. He has a wife and one child;

-- Vang My Ly (noted in reftel as Vang Mi Ly), 24 years old, also from Giap Trung village, Thang Tin Commune, Hoang Su Phi District. He was arrested December 6, 2003 and has been sentenced to 26 months imprisonment. He became a Protestant in 1991. His wife and three children are also described as facing economic hardship;

-- Ly Chin Seng, 60 years old, is the father of Ly Sin Quang. He is from Giap Trung town, Thang Tin Commune, Hoang Su Phi District. He was arrested December 17, 2003 and sentenced to 36 months imprisonment. He became a Protestant in 1991.

2. (U) The Protestant source did not have the exact charges on which these individuals were convicted, but claimed that the arrests and sentences were directly related to their religious activities.

3. (U) The same source noted, however, that problems for Protestants in other Northwest provinces, notably the newly separate province of Dien Bien Phu and Lai Chau (of which Dien Bien Phu was previously a part), had abated significantly over the past several months. In his opinion, the only province in the Northwest Highlands where ethnic minority Protestants continue to face harassment and/or arrest was Ha Giang. He was unable to offer any hypothesis on why this was the case.

4. (U) Comment: Embassy provided an updated list of persons believed to be imprisoned, harassed, or raped in cases related to their religious beliefs - including all four of the individuals named above - to the Government Committee on Religious Affairs and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs on April 14, and asked them to investigate and report back to Embassy. A similar list was sent to the MFA on March 19 under cover of diplomatic note, also asking for information. We are not optimistic that either institution will respond any time soon -- we are still waiting for a response from the Ministry of Public Security to the list Ambassador Hanford provided in October, despite our repeated follow-up inquiries -- but we will continue to ask, particularly as we prepare the next draft International Religious Freedom Report for Vietnam.

BURGHARDT